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The Bible in the Theological Seminary.

SHALL THE OLD TESTAMENT BE USED AS A MEDIUM OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING?

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It is, to say the least, a genuine surprise that a member of a theological faculty in Germany should seriously defend the proposition that students of theology should not be required to study Hebrew and the Old Testament in the original. It is at first sight, at any rate, equally astounding that teachers of religion in that "land of authors and thinkers" should propose that the study of the Old Testament be excluded from the curriculum of religious training in the schools. And yet both of these propositions have been made; they have been for months, and are being yet, discussed in all seriousness by scholars and religious periodicals in the Fatherland. The first proposition was made by Dr. Schwally, of Strassburg, in a review of a little Hebrew grammar in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, No. 9. He says there: "The entire Hebrew school literature would disappear at one blow if the leaders in this department could come to see that it is entirely unnecessary and superfluous to vex and perplex (*quälen*) young theological students with the study of the Hebrew language. In order to understand the political and religious history of Israel, we need nothing more than translations. The æsthetic worth of this literature is amply reflected in the translation of Luther, who has, *e. g.*, in the Psalms, surpassed even the original. Those, however, who want to learn the original tongue for the purpose of understanding all the better the Old Testament writings, have the time and the opportunity to do so at the universities. In this case it is much better that the student enter without any knowledge of the subject than that he have distorted and false ideas."

The editors of this model critical journal, Professors Harnack and Schürer, added a note to this announcement—something done by them but very rarely—to the effect that they felt themselves constrained to express their dissent in this matter. Naturally others did the same, the most notable article in reply being undoubtedly that of Dobschütz, of Jena, in the organ of liberal theology in Germany, the *Christliche Welt*, of Leipzig (No. 30), in which he emphasized especially the importance of the lexical study of the Old Testament for the understanding of the New. In this article, among other notable statements, is also found the admission that the idea of Schwally, that the study of the Old Testament in the original should be left entirely to the specialist, is a view entertained by quite a number of other biblical scholars in the theological faculties of Germany.

The discussion of the other problem, namely, the removal of the Old Testament from the scheme of Christian education, has been warmly carried on ever since the opening of the year, especially in the *Christliche Welt*, which is the arena for all things new and daring in German theological thought. It originated in the problem, what portions of the Old Testament should now be taught in the schools since the current criticism of the day had so seriously and materially modified the traditional views on the religious history and individual characters of these books. The most noteworthy article in the series appears in No. 18, where a religious teacher published a long article entitled "The Old Testament has no place in Christian Education." His arguments were three in number, namely, that the Old Testament can be dispensed with in Christian education; that Christianity is not a development of Old Testament premises, and that correct pedagogics are against its retention in the scheme. The writer is a radical, but writes warmly and earnestly. He represents the newest views on the subject. Among his propositions are such as these: "Christianity maintains the same relation to Judaism that it does to heathenism. The Jewish prophets did not prophesy Christ as he really appeared and looked. Christianity is something absolutely new, and not merely Messiah-believing Judaism. Christ is not the Jewish Messiah, but the Savior of mankind. The spirit of the Old Testament is radically different from that of the New. Christ has himself declared the Old Testament abrogated. The Decalogue is not suitable to constitute a portion of Christian ethics. It is high time that the prophetic Messiah-mantle be removed from the shoulders of the exalted Christ, so that we may be able to see the Son of Man in all his glory." These and similar views are expressed and defended by this anonymous writer, who is also the author of a publication having a similar tendency, entitled, "*Das Judenchristentum in der religiösen Volks-erziehung des deutschen Protestantismus.*"

Naturally these propositions have called forth the sharpest of replies, also on the part of liberal writers. The editor of the *Welt* has written several articles in which he shows what portions of the Old Testament can yet be used in religious education. A most noteworthy discussion is a long article in No. 25 of that journal, in which the writer endeavors to show that of the historical portions of the Old Testament but little can henceforth be usefully employed, but that the prophetic and poetical portions of the Old Testament can still be used to great advantage. The latest reply is found in No. 32, where an "orthodox" writer suggests caution and carefulness. His propositions are: "Remember that you are standing upon sacred ground. Be careful not to underestimate the offense given by destructive criticism to countless earnest Christians, and do not claim as certain results of criticism which are only hypotheses." The article in question together with others called forth by this remarkable discussion are deeply instructive and a sign of the times. The question at issue is, What shall the church do with the Scriptures if a neological criticism has undermined them? The outcome of this debate will be watched with intense interest.